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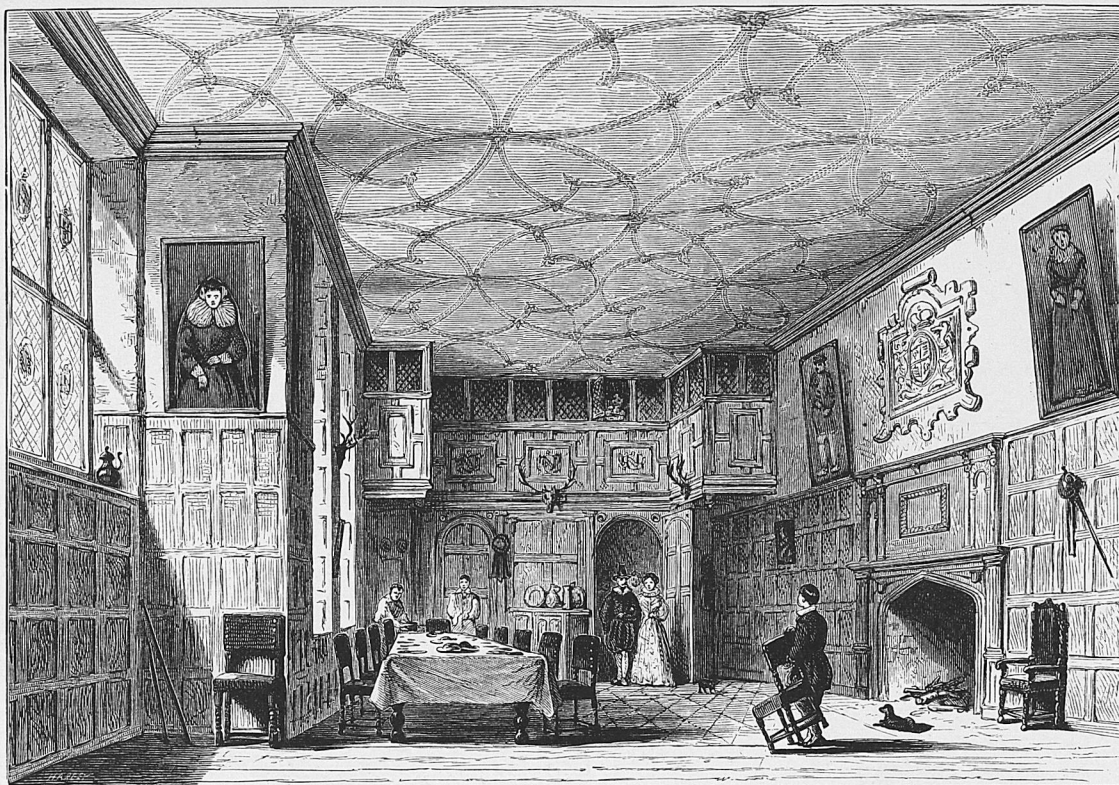
HOUSEHOLD ART.

BY CHARLES WYLLYS ELLIOTT.

I.—THE DINING-ROOM.

THE papers on Household Art that we design to give in the *Art Journal* will treat of and illustrate the interior or house-

hold life of the present day, though not to the exclusion of the past. Believing as we do that the home is the foundation of all that is



No. 1.—Old English Dining-Room.

good in our civilisation, we hold that whatever makes the home more attractive, more beautiful, more useful to all the finer wants of our natures, is of the first importance, and therefore worthy the attention and thought of the noblest and best of men and women.

If the homes of the rich were fragrant with good taste and repose, and not displays of upholsterers' shops, there would be less madness in them; if the rooms of the poor were tasteful and clean, the grog-shops would have fewer votaries.

Unquestionably the tendency of Art (all Art) is towards cost and luxury; but we know that it can be applied to the humblest home and the leanest purse: and among our examples will be some so simple, that the accomplished workman and the fastidious critic will value them but little.

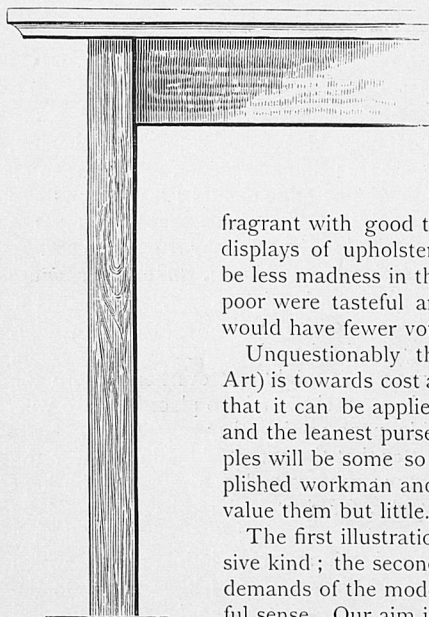
The first illustration is not of this inexpensive kind; the second will, we hope, meet the demands of the moderate purse and the tasteful sense. Our aim is to make the *Art Journal* the exponent of whatever will give grace

and dignity to life and satisfaction to the soul. Art applied to the uses of life, therefore, becomes a subject of great value; and fortunately, as we

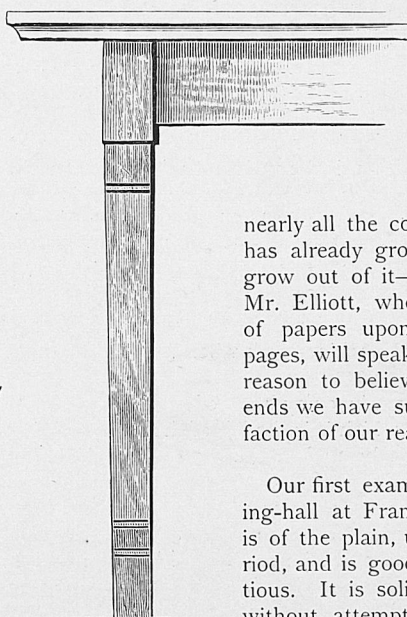
think, Art thus applied to-day engages not only a wide public attention, but also the earnest services of some of the best artists and workmen here and in

nearly all the countries of Europe. Much has already grown out of this, more will grow out of it—who can tell how much? Mr. Elliott, who has undertaken a series of papers upon Household Art for our pages, will speak for himself, and, we have reason to believe, will work towards the ends we have suggested, and to the satisfaction of our readers.

Our first example (No. 1) is of the dining-hall at Franke, in Kent, England. It is of the plain, undecorated, mediæval period, and is good because it is not pretentious. It is solid, substantial, and useful, without attempting much more, and so commends itself to us.



No. 2.—Table-Leg.



No. 3.—Table-Leg.

What I would wish to change in it would be the wainscot; to cut it down to three panels at most, and thus obtain above it more wall and more colour. As it is, the room seems heavy, and possibly would be gloomy. But for gala-days, for a house notable for its free hospitality, filled with a gay company "flaunting in silks and colours," one can easily see that this severe, dull-coloured background would be most effective. It is not that the wall is too dull with this high wainscoting, but that light and air are both excluded. While the central interest of a dining-room is the table, one likes to catch glimpses through the windows of shadowy grass-plots, waving trees, banks of flowers; therefore it is that I would reduce the wainscot, or at least would bring down the windows. It is a question whether a wainscot should ever be more than four feet high. I like a wall, a flat unbroken surface; for there is the opportunity for a picture or a brass plate or a few great Delft dishes. Simplicity certainly, but variety also.

Passing along from this illustration, let me make a few statements applicable more particularly to our day.

There may be a more important subject than what we eat and how we eat it, but I know of none.

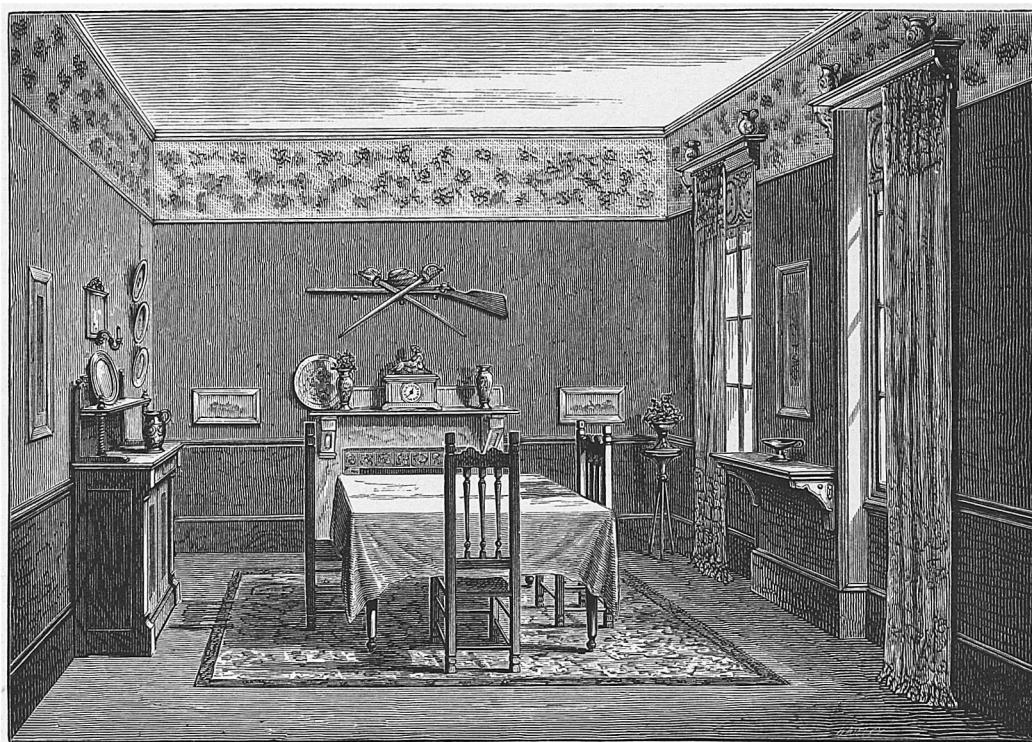
What we eat depends upon the mercy of the Irish maiden who

reigns below. How we eat it should depend (if the first does not) upon the lady who rules above. Will the goddess never know or believe in the beauty and dignity of her mission? How we eat, therefore, introduces and includes the whole subject of the dining-room.

As the body is of the first importance, I do not apologise for asking for it supreme attention.

Whatever the soul may be capable of, it is a wretchedness and a torture if the body is a prey to dyspepsia and disease. Take care of the body, and in good degree the soul will be wholesome and hopeful. Some one has said, "Let me make the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes the laws." I would add to this, "Let me make the stomach sound and the blood red, and they may preach the sermons who like."

Art does not depend wholly upon cost. It should be kept in mind, that a true artist does not demand great expenditure to express his sense of the beautiful. He will make his dining-room costing three hundred dollars as expressive as one costing three thousand. He will demand as fine a sense of form and as true a fitness of decoration in the table costing forty dollars as in one costing four hundred. Let us try to make this plain.



No. 4.—Dining-Room.

The simplest form of table-leg is a square stick like No. 2. The artist will not be content with this, he will taper the leg from the point near where the rail touches it; he will cut a few transverse lines as indicated in No. 3; and this little bit of art will relieve it from the commonness and carelessness so conspicuous in No. 2. The difference in the cost of this touch of handwork, inspired by the art of the worker, is perhaps five minutes of time.

It may be well here to make another point, viz.:

Handwork is better than machine-work wherever Art attempts to express itself.

In every log, in every stone, in every lump of clay, lies hidden a delicious and divine beauty, which it is the life of the artist to bring to light. This can be done best when the sense of the beautiful in the brain inspires the hand which holds the tool, as in the works of the best sculptors and metal-workers; and next when the keen perception of the artist is made clear to some other hand which holds the tool; and this never can be the case when the tool is held by a machine. Soul-work and handwork must in some way be married to secure the divine combination of use and beauty. Now, imitation is not soul-work.

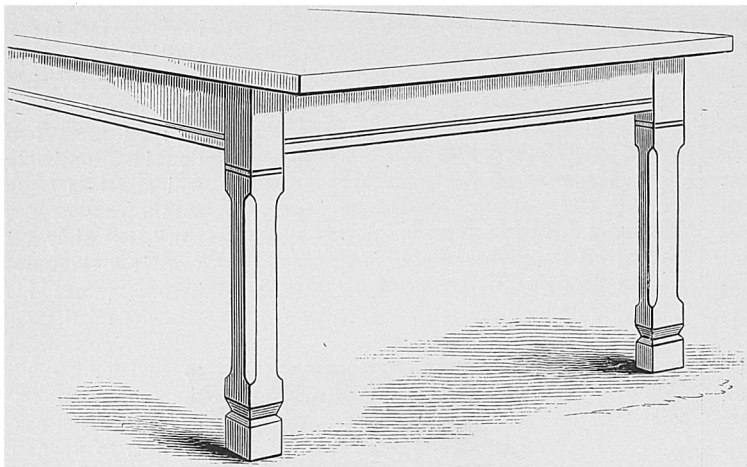
In the domain, then, of Household Art, use is first, then beauty.

The artist must combine these; he must create, and the man of taste must perceive and enjoy. The critic should tell us when these two are combined; commonly he does tell us that they are not combined. He sees only the bad; which is easy enough to see.

Let us look at a modest dining-room (No. 4). We may suppose the room to be in size, say, fourteen by sixteen feet. It is better if the fireplace can be made at the end of the room, for in winter, if a fire should be burning on the hearth at the side of the room, the back of the person nearest it might get overheated. In the small sketch here given, the mantel-piece is so placed. Two windows are shown on one side, none on the other.

As to the floor, it is better that the carpet should not cover the whole floor, for these reasons: corners and angles cannot be kept clean, they become receptacles for dust and moths; it cannot be taken up more than once or twice a year; it costs more than a simple centre-piece. In the sketch, a centre-cloth is shown, which may be of some small-figured carpet, or of felting nailed to the floor. This can easily be kept clean, and can be taken up and shaken with ease. It is good taste if it be bordered with a mar-

gin of strong, coarse, dark cloth—crimson or blue or green, to harmonise with the prevailing tone of the room. This cloth should be large enough to hold the table and chairs when placed at the table. The floor outside the cloth may be stained with a strong decoction of tobacco, or a stain made of burnt umber and turpentine, both of which result in a dark brown. This should then be finished with two coats of yellow shellac, which is easily kept



No. 5.—Table.

clean; or it may be painted with turpentine, not oil paint, in any dark neutral tint. Neither the floor nor carpet should challenge attention.

The walls may be papered, and, if much cracked, this is good treatment. If the house is new, it is more desirable to colour the walls with flat tints of what is called kalsomine-paint. This is a paint made with colour mixed with glue-water, which fixes it so that it does not rub off when dry.

A chair-rail shown in the sketch, at about three feet from the floor, is valuable as a protection to the wall and also as a gratification to the mind, conveying as it does a sense of protection.

A picture-moulding at some twelve to fifteen inches from the ceiling is shown in the sketch; this can be made both useful and decorative, as we shall see. But this and the chair-rail both may be left out if extreme economy is aimed at.

As to colour. Some one colour should be decided on as the key to the harmony. It will cost but a trifle more to have a combination and harmony of colours, than it will to make the whole wall of one tint. For example, let crimson be the colour, the wall may then be treated in this way: the picture-rail and the chair-rail may be painted crimson, slightly dulled with Venetian or Indian red, with turpentine-paint, or kalsomine, because that leaves no shine, while oil-paint does. Between the picture-rail and the chair-rail the wall may be kalsomined or papered with a green-grey tint, like that of sage. The space above the picture-rail may be finished with a light olive-green, but heavier than the middle wall, finishing with a line an inch wide at the top, of crimson moulding or paper.

Between the chair-rail and the mop-board a rich olive-green, much darker than the top, should be applied. In case the whole wall is to be of one tint, that tint should be the sage-green, unless there is a great deal of light in the room, when a darker tint may be used. The ceiling should not be green or crimson, but a very light shade of blue-grey, almost white.

In case crimson is thus used, the wood-work of the room should be brought into harmony. It should not be crimson, but one of these neutral tinted greens or black, with some of the mouldings in crimson. Most pleasing effects may be had at little cost, by papering the space above the picture-moulding with a gay pattern of birds or flowers. But avoid this on the main wall between the chair and picture rails, because it fatigues the eye, kills furniture, pictures, curtains, flowers, dresses, everything you really wish to see. The walls are nothing—nothing but a background to what you wish to put against them. In a chamber they may be made ornamental and conspicuous, not in a dining-room.

A wall tinted with some neutral, quiet colour, like the foregoing, makes a perfect background for pictures, brass-work, pottery, people; this last as important as the rest, perhaps.

If we make green the key-note, we can proceed in this way: make the chair and picture rail of a dark, cool (not raw) green; the space above the picture-rail next the ceiling may be a crimson, as also the space below the chair-rail next the mop-board. The wall-space between the picture and chair rail then takes a light-yellow, tempered with a very little blue and black. The same treatment of the wood-work as before may be used, except that, if the wood be painted black in place of green, the mouldings should be the same green as the chair-rail; but if the wood-work is made green, then the mouldings should be crimson, to harmonise with the crimson of the dado and frieze. Should any person wish to put these suggestions into practice, he must beware the ordinary painter, who knows nothing and cares less. Let him make with water-colours a small sketch of the wall, with the colours he wishes, or else employ an expert who has an eye for tints and knows what harmony means. In a self-sufficient time, most people, particularly if they have made money, believe they are competent to decide everything except law and medicine; theology now has no deference shown it. The result is violence (not barbarism, that is better), crudity, and wildness, in the interior of our houses. To the self-sufficient mortal, it was a brilliant thought to cover his walls with crimson paper, put a crimson carpet on his floor, crimson covers on his tables, crimson curtains to his windows, crimson cushions to his chairs! If his face could only have become crimson, the match would have been perfect.

And decorators, too, have done this, who called themselves artists!

Two windows are shown, with curtains; these should be hung on wooden or iron or brass rods, to draw back and forth. By all means avoid loops and cords and tassels, which are not only useless but expensive.

These curtains are good if made of some of the new patterns of waste silk, which are now produced with quiet designs and in most harmonious colours; or a cheaper curtain may be made with silesia or even ordinary brown cotton, having a band of colour at top and bottom, that at the bottom being broadest. The chintzes and cretonnes are almost always too high-coloured for this room; but for a summer-house they may be made harmonious. The raw-coloured stuffs called "reps" are not to be tolerated.

Projecting shelves are shown over the windows and doors, which can be cheaply decorated with common pots, such as are now made in various parts of Europe and on the African coast. Most people have inherited a few China or Delft plates; these make a good decoration hung on the walls of a dining-room, as shown in sketch No. 4.

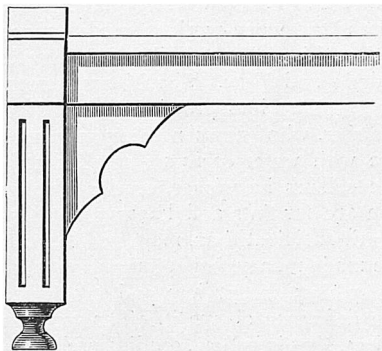
The dining-table is less conspicuous than that of the library, because it is covered much of the time. Still it should be good in form, and adapted to its uses. There is no doubt that a table standing on four legs is better than a table with a pedestal, or one leg; particularly so if the table is a low-priced one—for an extension-table of this sort (even with four legs) is liable to become a rattle-trap. For all the ordinary uses of life a table five feet long, three feet nine inches or four feet wide, is the best; planted on four legs it lasts forever, and is always good; at such a table eight persons can sit comfortably, and it will do well for three.



No. 6.—Chair.

As to shape I would for myself never have a round table—the corners are valuable for room, and from them the cloth hangs in distinct and beautiful lines, as it does not from a rounded top. Those who are nervous about scratches will not have stretchers or foot-bars to a dining-table—others will.

The top should be thoroughly oiled and rubbed, not shellacked or polished; and this top should not be over twenty-nine inches from the floor—for most persons twenty-eight and a half inches is better. Nine-tenths of our tables are thirty or more inches, and yet we live, and do not know it!

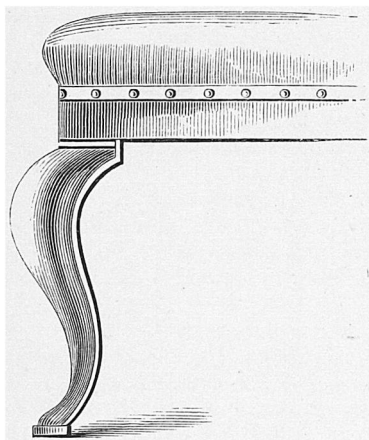


No. 7.—Bracket.

A cheap and simple form of dining-table is shown as No. 5, which would be suitable for such a room as we here attempt to describe. More elaborate designs will be given hereafter.

In the sketch No. 4 is shown a side-table which may be very cheaply introduced by being made to rest on brackets.

The sideboard is the most important piece of cabinet-work in the room, and upon this more expense may be laid. Avoid veneers, as you do sin or drink; as a rule, they are to be used only in the very best work. The grain of our woods, such as ash, oak, and walnut, is always handsome if treated properly, and conveys a sense of honesty worth more than those cheap veneers. Brass-work is always decorative if not used in excess; and handles, hinges, and key-plates, give off an effective and brilliant light. So, too, a brass dish on the top, or a few pieces of plate or china, give life to the room, and should, if possible, be used for this purpose. A shelf or two on the top of the sideboard, as indicated in No. 4, will be of great use and also give an opportunity to decorate the room as just stated. I never would have a marble slab on a sideboard—the blood runs cold in one's veins when a fine china dish is set down on the cold and cruel stone. You know it will break, you are sure it ought to; you pity the servant who lives in that



No. 9.—Chair-Leg.

house, for surely her end is destruction. Even with a wooden table I would lay on a good towel, and if with a stripe of colour in the ends, so much the better. The brutal way the edges and rims of our plates and dishes are broken and chipped should warn us against marble slabs. China should never be set down upon stone—never, never!

A little colour may be used in the lines of the wood-work of the sideboard, or a few of the panels may be illuminated with decorative

tiles, or paintings. Care must be used not to overdo this, for that is so easy, while restraint is so difficult.

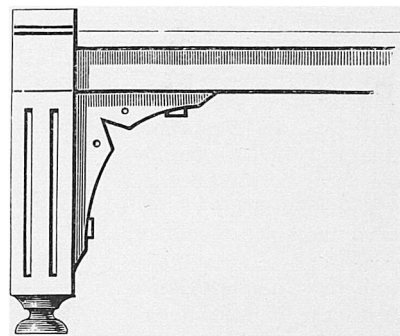
Chairs as here indicated (No. 6) have no carving or decoration—they are to be simply made; but that does not imply that any cabinet-maker, with no perception of beauty and delicacy of form, is fit to make them. Nor does it follow at all that any architect, very good though he may prove himself to design the openings for brick walls or the arches of a railway-station, is the man to secure delicacy of form and fitness for use.

There are ways and ways of doing things; and I beg leave to

ask that it may never be forgotten that perfection of details makes the difference between first rate and third or fifth rate—in which latter rank most of our furniture should be placed.

Remember that perfection of detail won the great German-French War, and slovenliness of detail lost it.

The commonplace, tasteless, reckless workman will be perfectly satisfied with a bracket like this (No. 7) stuck on with a little glue, and very likely will think it as good as or better than No. 8. But will you? You will notice better lines in the last, and that it is



No. 8.—Bracket.

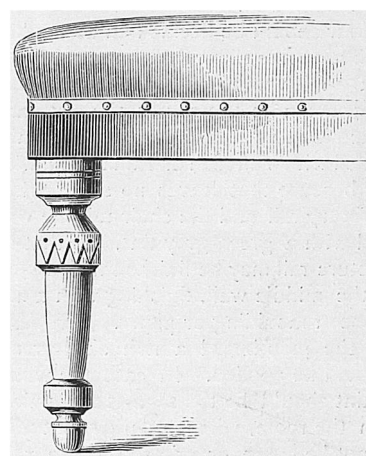
held in its place, not by glue, which in our climate does not stick forever, but by two round dowels; these two dowels probably will add two cents to the cost of the work, but they are worth two thousand if one values his peace of mind.

Now, we are not to find fault with the workman because he is not susceptible to fineness of form and delicacy

of decoration, especially when the old curse—the ban of servile labour—is upon him. He is not a designer, of course, and yet the clever workman has come to be in this country the designer and contriver of almost all the furniture we have. Generally, too, he is German, and (almost of course) an imitator of the Louis XIV. styles—the very worst the world has ever seen. Imitating vulgarity and unfitness, what can the result be—what must it be?

What we must ask of the workman is that he shall carry out—at least try to, and be proud to—a good design faithfully, and with a trace of understanding; nor need we be shocked because a good architect, who deals with masses of stone and brick and timber, fails where he attempts a sideboard or mirror-frame. Can the broad-axe hew the sleeping fawn? Can the house-painter touch the Japanese porcelain? It is unwise to ask it.

Most of our designers for furniture, as has been suggested, have



No. 10.—Chair-Leg.

risen from the ranks of the workmen, and most have been Germans. It does not follow that a workman may not be a good designer, nor does it follow that a German is not so. The fact, as a rule, is, that neither of these has so far produced good work, either here or, as a distinguished German informed me, in Germany. The French or *Louis-Quatorze* furniture certainly had a "style" which was most characteristic of the time and of the man. It was free, flamboyant,

scrolled, and carved, and for us ridiculous. Wood, in this terrible period, was carved and twisted into shapes which were not only ugly, but wholly unsuited to wood, which has to retain its strength. After getting the wood, with vast labour, into these bad forms, it was common to gild it all over. Fancy the dismay of a stalwart knight of the fourteenth or the nineteenth century if asked to seat himself in one of these chairs—if like to anything, certainly more like some plaything made of sugar-candy and covered with gold-leaf, destined to be broken up and devoured after dinner!

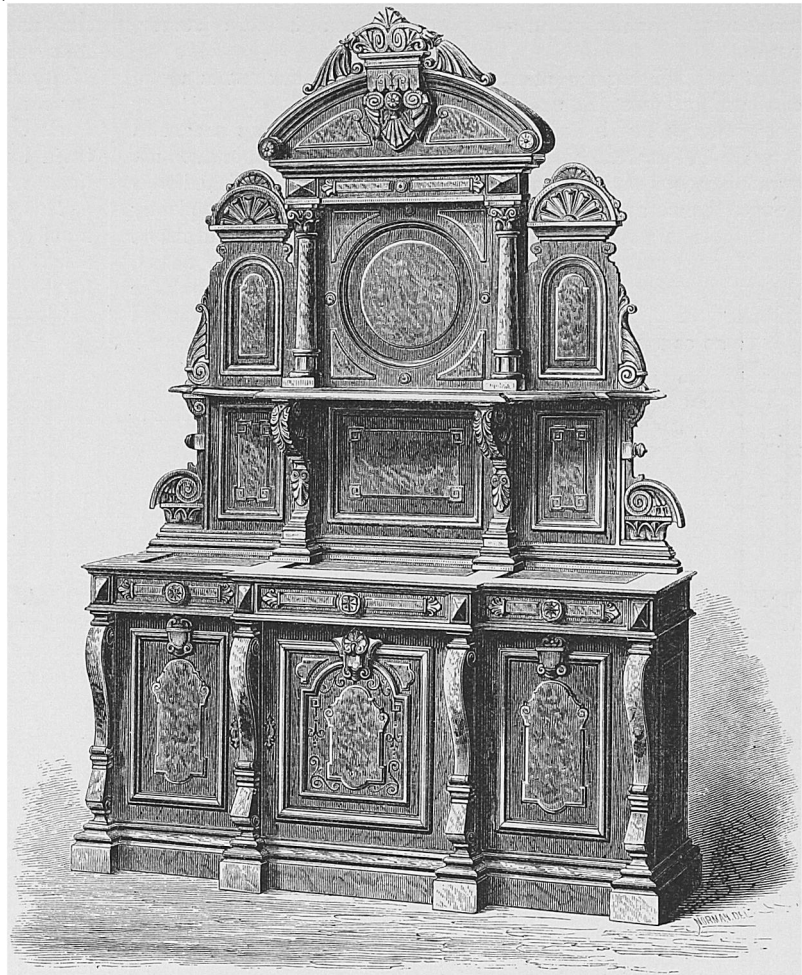
First the wood was tortured into shapes which cut its fibre and destroyed its strength, and then it was gilded over to hide the veining and colours, which, in many woods, are most interesting and pleasing.

Consider, for one moment, two chair-legs intended to hold you when you have reached the comfortable weight of two hundred pounds. You are painfully sure that you will break down on No. 9, and cheerfully certain that you cannot on No. 10.

One of our distinguished preachers tells me he is never sure of the salvation of any parishioner until he has crushed down one or two of her chairs, and finds after all that her temper remains sweet, and that her weak chairs are replaced by strong ones.

A dining-room may be furnished in some such simple style as is indicated in No. 4 for from three to five hundred dollars, so that it will be as harmonious and satisfactory as one more costly. But no one will expect to secure any great measure of display beyond purity of taste for the smaller sum of money.

A very great difficulty with most of our fellow-creatures is to get them to see anything for themselves. To them, if the thing is the fashion, or very common, it is right—it passes. Many are preoccupied—taken up with themselves, and see nothing but themselves in either Nature or Art—others are too lazy to take any trouble even to *see*. These two classes are hopeless. But there are those who can see and will see. We wish to reach them, and we spread on our pages two designs—one in German-French-bastard style, and one in a style which may meet the wants of some genuine souls. Both these have been produced, and the first one by the thou-



No. 11.—Sideboard (*False Style*).



No. 12.—Sideboard (*Artistic Style*).

sand. It graces all good steamboats and half the fine houses in the country. Let us look at No. 11. It is one of the very best of this kind of work, which may be called "German-French-Roman-Greek style." That it has merits no one need deny, in face of the fact that it has met the wants of so many thousands of people, not devoid of taste, and in some respects quite intelligent. But, in spite of this, it cannot be called good, and to a better perception it must be called bad.

Its merits are: that it gives many of the conveniences of a sideboard; that it approaches symmetry of form; that it has some small perception of the value of ornament; and—what else? Its atrocities are: that on the base are scrolled and carved pilasters, which are not of the least use, and have no beauty; that the mouldings of the doors are broken on the top with a carved cap or shield, which is of no possible use except to fall off; that its panels are made with pieces of veneer, which are sure to peel; that its drawer-handles are a sort of wooden rosette and not handles at all; that the shelf is supported by carved brackets ugly in form, resting on bases heavy enough to support a strong column; that its top is formed of the façade of a Greek-Roman-Renaissance temple, which is not only bad in itself, but has no reason at all for being there; and that the ornaments, having no sentiment, are stuck here and there by a designer who had none. We say this with all respect for the designer, who did his best; but then he has none of the qualities necessary, except painstaking, which will not make a designer, though it will a first-rate workman. We

turn now to No. 12, which, if made plainly, will cost but little more than No. 11. As shown here—highly decorated—it will, of course, cost more.

This was built for a gentleman of California, and, as it is a personal matter, must be praised softly. The panels of the lower doors are decorated with the stork, sacred to the Japanese, and always full of grace. They are white, on sage-green ground, which harmonises well with the black-walnut, which wood is finished with a warm glow, and not a dead brown; the brass hinges plainly speak their uses; the posts, finished with lions' heads and claws, seem strong enough to support the table; the same lions' heads, with mouth-rings, form the handles of the drawers; the middle arch shows a shelf and room for a *jardinière*, or other ornamental object; no carving is expended on the doors or ends, the edge of

the table only being cut; on the top part, the first and third shelves are supported by light and delicately-cut columns; the middle space shows a small lock-up cupboard, for a few cigars or some dainty thing; the panels of this are filled with art-tiles, showing some of the food-industries. In the top panels is a line of small flower-tiles, and at either end of the top shelf are two polished brass griffins or dogs, which, in a way, seem to stand sentinel over all.

This piece of work seems to mean something, and has met with much praise; the fault—if a fault—is over-decoration. But all is solid—not a veneer or moulding is glued on, and it is impossible for it to drop to pieces, even in the climate of California.

Choose, then, which will serve you, No. 11 or No. 12.

(To be continued.)

THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF ART-NEEDLEWORK, SOUTH KENSINGTON.

THE wants of the so-called working-classes have now for many years occupied the attention of publicists, to the exclusion of sections of the community whose needs are not the less pressing because more concealed. The working-man, when poverty overtakes him, has many doors open for his relief; and he enters with, in most instances, but a faint consciousness of his doing anything which calls for a sacrifice of feeling or a compromise of caste. His children may have a suitable education for twopence or threepence a week; while the poor gentleman, if he dares think of a public school for his boys, knows well that he and his wife must pinch and scrape and suffer for the better part of their lives. If, in the meantime, absolute want steps in, a thousand considerations urge concealment, and it is only by the wistful eye and the fleshless temple that friends discover that "things are not going altogether well with poor Mr. So-and-so." In the event of his death, his widow and daughters have but too often to submit to the bitter bondage of dependency, or disappear altogether in the vain struggle for subsistence.

It is with peculiar pleasure, therefore, that we welcome a scheme which has for one of its objects the ameliorating the condition of reduced gentlewomen without in any way derogating from their position as ladies.

The Royal School of Art-Needlework is admirably housed in one of the large "annexes" behind Albert Hall, entering from the Exhibition Road. It is under the patronage of the Queen, has the Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein for president, and Lady Marian Alford for vice-president. The last-named lady, indeed, with Lady Charlotte Schreiber, one of the council, is the life and soul of the

school. Its objects are to "restore ornamental needlework, for secular purposes, to the high place it once held among decorative arts, and to supply suitable employment for poor gentlewomen." The council is composed of ladies of rank and recognised intelligence, who are aided by an Artists' Committee, consisting of Messrs. Frederick Leighton, R.A., V. Prinsep, and E. F. Bodley. The staff of lady-workers, already numbering a hundred, has been carefully trained, and the school undertakes not only to execute needlework of all kinds (church-work and lace excepted) and to repair and restore ancient needlework, but to teach, and even give lessons, to amateurs at their own homes.

Among the many examples of work which struck us as being beautifully artistic in design and in the play of colour, we would mention the curtain-borders commissioned by the Duke of Buccleuch; door-curtains for the Duchess of Manchester; fourfold screen, embroidered with flowers, illustrative of the four seasons, for the Empress of Russia; embroidered fawn-coloured silk panels for the Duke of Westminster; and brown velvet, embroidered with sunflowers, for her Majesty. There were also many strikingly rich examples of *appliqué* work, and such commonplace materials as drilled cloth and Bolton sheeting were sublimed into things of beauty by the cunning of the embroiderer's art. No sort of commission is refused, from an ordinary carriage-rug to an emperor's *portière*, and equal conscientiousness is bestowed on all. That the school is doing admirable work and fills up a very palpable want, no one can visit it without being at once convinced; and those ladies who have conceived and carried out the idea deserve the warmest thanks of the community at large.

THE RIVEN SHIELD.

P. R. MORRIS, Painter.

W. GREATBACH, Engraver.

THIS engraving is from a picture by an artist some of whose works have had similar recognition in our pages. It represents a presumed incident in a love-story, probably originating in the lines attached to the title, in the catalogue of the Royal Academy for 1866, when the picture was exhibited there:—

"She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them."—*Othello*.

It is scarcely possible that Mr. Morris could have intended the composition as an illustration of a scene between the Moor and Desdemona, for there is nothing in the least suggestive of Venice apparent anywhere; a terraced garden like this, with trees of forest-growth rising from undulating ground, on the summit of which one has a glimpse of the upper storey of a noble mansion, is what neither Brabantio, nor even the Duke himself, could command within the circumference of the city and its immediate surroundings. We

can only consider the picture as working out the same idea as that related by Othello, yet in another direction. A knight has set up his battered shield before his affianced lady, and explains to her where and how the "wounds and bruises" on it occurred; while she, holding his hand, listens very thoughtfully to the narrative, and "loves him for the dangers he had passed." His pennon, giving some evidence, by sundry rents, of having encountered the battle and the breeze, he has brought to her for repairs.

The materials of the composition are abundantly rich and luxurious, recalling, as a whole, the magnificence of Florence in her grandest days; the picture is poetic in conception, coloured with a brilliancy taught by the works of the old Venetian painters, and most pleasing in feeling and expression. 'The Riven Shield,' though a comparatively early picture of the artist's, is one of very considerable merit in its varied qualities.